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Worstsaid Ho, worstheard Ho

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Worstsaid Ho, worstheard Ho

Clara Maïda

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(under the title *Worstsaid Ho, worstheard Ho*)

Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*¹:

"On. Say on. Be said on. Somehow on. Till nohow on. Said nohow on.

Say for be said. Missaid. From now say for missaid.

Say a body. Where none. No mind. Where none. That at least. A place. Where none. For the body.

To be in. Move in. Out of. Back into. No. No out. No back. Only in. Stay in. On in. Still."

In his fascinating world, closed on itself, through an extreme effort of rarefaction of words -- in a language stripped to a minimum --, Beckett attempts the conquest of the secluded, unspeakable, impalpable zone of the psyche that can be imagined as immersed in an immense and immobile elsewhere or, on the contrary, as tenuous as the slight palpitation of a point. The being in its most inaccessible nudity.

Paradoxical as it may appear, and for all its volubility, my music hinges on this search.

Beckett went to the extreme limit of the impossible to say -- where no word is spoken, how can it be said? From this limit, the music weaves its way on.

To this imprecise border where symbolization has no more hold, where something is irreducibly beyond the capture that language would like to attempt at, where the rough cuts of the words cannot evoke the opacity of so fragile and at the same time so powerful a presence, music spreads out its world of signs, its web of vibrations.

How to describe or make the voice audible, the voice of absence or the absence of voice, of what is experienced before the acquisition of language, nestling in an embryonic state in the most private nucleus of the psyche (the autistic nucleus)?

"Say a body", Beckett writes.

But which body? The biological body, a complex and surprising assembling? The psychic body, a body of sensation? The primeval experience of the body on which marks, invisible scarifications get imprinted from birth. Traces of pleasure and suffering delineate this body which is halfway biologic and psychic, the body of desire, the driving body. Can these two approaches of the body overlap? One knows that it is not so simple. The drive does not run along the axons of neurones... but sound may run as the drive.

¹ Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, London, John Calder Publishing, 1983

What is the body? How is the unity of the biological body possible? How is this body experienced, perceived? How is the unity of a person possible? Is she at one with her body or is she separated from it? How can she feel that this body, made of a multiplicity of buried imprints and carnal recollections, carrying an unconscious and fragmentary memory, is one and only one, her own, in space and time? And one can feel the proximity of psychic collapse or disintegration always possible to experience, this ever permanent scission of the being which keeps inside multiple voices, some of which are inaccessible (the unconscious).

On a biomolecular level, the DNA molecule is made of pairs of nucleotides -- minimal chemical units -- that code for proteins. How do these interactions induce more and more refined elaborations, developing at ever more complex levels to constitute organs and an organism? How is this cohesion of matter possible?

On the psychoanalytical level, how are perceptions, sensations, affects, as archaic as they may be, gradually structured into a literal order -- a combinatorial of signifiers --, this framework of all the representative constructions for an individual? These unconscious mnemonic traces are indelible inscriptions and are characterized by the singular architecture of his psyche. What keeps the permanence of an *I*, despite the various psychic instances of the person, through the succession of experienced space and time?

These questions run through all my pieces, whatever the angle selected, whether genetic or neurophysiologic, i.e. at the heart of matter and its laws, or psychoanalytical, referring to psychic organization.

It is the enigma of the Being -- the origin of the world, the living --, and it is also the enigma of the being -- the origin of thought, affects, the Ego.

It is the question that haunts the child and Art tries to give an answer to this "Why?" which comes across the incomprehensible.

Why do we receive music as a whole, as a sound entity, in spite of its disintegrated matter? How do those frameworks of points and waves shape coherence of sound?

To be closest to one's truth is attempting at letting the little autistic girl speak as she comes up against the world. Music was born of her silence, of an impossibility of words. And musical writing provides a possibility of meaning. It is the voice of childhood, with its questions, its anguish, its suffering and its traumas, surrounded by the opacity of a psyche being still in the making. How to restore it to the adult who cannot or does not want to hear it? The artistic quest tries to recall this presence of the child who lives on somewhere within us, and to allow an unexpressed voice to be heard, sometimes a nearly hallucinatory presence. To listen to all the times that are there, in their full presence, so close and so distant, since it is known that all the stages of structuring are stored. Nothing is forgotten, not even the forgotten. Through the creative process, something is called upon, something will be able to occur.

The work of writing, so close to a psychoanalytical process, thus allows to swerve outside of oneself what was intimately veiled, and to recognize this self in artistic production, to recognize oneself.

Musical work has an ambiguous status. It is a piece of the psyche, a part of the subject fluttering outside of the body, a quasi-substance vibrating into space, for it has materialized, given shape to a psychic reality. It is also a perceptible object which gains its autonomy and which spreads out in a space-time, an intra-subjective territory between the creator and him/herself, an inter-subjective territory between the creator and the listener.

This projection of a form combines aesthetic and cathartic functions. The boundaries between inside and outside have disappeared, and the passing point can then constitute a sound mirror in which I, a composer, will recognize myself, and will have to accept to reincorporate this part of the unknown. This mirror-witness reflects, work after work, through the successive projections and reintjections, the inner psychic mutations of the artist. This mirror will perhaps send some feedback to the one, different and yet similar, who receives it.

Why such fascination for music?

Music has the specificity to always lie beyond. It lies beyond the Imaginary, for the figures and the volumes that it delineates are not images. The possibility of sound images can be called to mind, but then they present a kind of paradox. Being not perceptible through vision, they belong to the field of abstraction and its capacity to produce diagrams, configurations of mobile particles, which connect multitudes of points and dissolve into a polydimensional space. In such a perspective, music -- a sound body -- can express distorted and potentially endlessly distortable images of the body. The sound Imaginary goes beyond the limits of the visual Imaginary since the vectorizations of points, lines, curves, trajectories and intersections are part of a boundless space.

But music lies also beyond the symbolic, in its narrowest sense, i.e. beyond what is identified by language.

For Jacques Lacan, "The real, or what is perceived as such, is what absolutely resists to symbolization"². The symbolic system, in the most restrictive meaning of the term, only concerns language. But music develops an ensemble of articulations of signs. Accordingly, it can be envisaged as a language which, for lack of designation and meaning, cuts surfaces and marks condensations within undifferentiated sound, catches a portion of this infinite ensemble and tries to give a framework to this non-imaged figuration which could be linked to the theories that physicists put forward to explain the universe. The same endeavour to apprehend and contain the unknown is at the crossroads between the artistic and scientific approaches. Physical formulae and musical poetizing join in this non-symbolizing zone that the *Real* (according to Lacan) is, in a common effort to surround, envelop, reduce -- who knows? -- what is experienced as a void. How to create a shape around a void, the shape of this void, and make some meaning appear (a void not being

² Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire Livre I, Les écrits techniques de Freud (The Seminar Book I, Freud's Papers on Technique)*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1975. p. 110

what does not exist, but what cannot be represented without any scientific tools)? It is the capture of *non-sonic forces*³.

It is a journey in which the strangeness of outside and inside converge in a set of signs, and in the renewed attempt at recovering an originating funds, in the insistence to control these signs and to reiterate the trajectories of ever more tightened spirals around a centre, it is a matter of finally being born to the world and to oneself.

In this way, with each new piece, the inaugural and endlessly repeated -- quasi ritual -- act is the cut of a space of frequencies. It is as if a piece of sound cosmos was grabbed, a first caesura bringing me and something else into operation, and from this delimited surface, the work will have to spread out with its game of figures and its singularity.

"Say for be said. Missaid."⁴.

How to say what cannot be said? To say is a delusion, but an essential delusion. To say oneself is always say the gap, and in this gap with oneself, betray oneself (unveil oneself) and betray (fail). The power of music, however, is to offer us this wordless speech.

To allow oneself to drift off to the successive ephemeral figurations, constructions and deconstructions of fragile sound constellations which appear in the movement of their disappearance or disappear in the movement of their appearance. Ghostly and illusory nature of these objects carried away by the trajectories that turn around an absence, as the mathematical equation articulated around an x indicates the place of the unknown factor without being able to establish its shape.

The musical work is a paradoxical, two-sided construction.

On the one hand, it unrolls its sound chains, its interlocking of events. It appears in the thickness of a polystratified structure, accumulating layers of matter that slide or crystallize in a fluid movement or with furious oscillations. The intertwining of these multitudes allows to hear an evanescent presence that dances in the interstices.

In this way, it echoes the experience of any human being, who can feel that his psyche does not cover his brain with a perfect adequacy, his sensations go beyond his image of the body and, in his relation to the world, always misses the meeting.

On the other hand, the work undoes, point after point, the connections that were established and gave substance to objects. Lines loosen, surfaces disintegrate, and in a gap emerges this nudity that Beckett was hunting down between the words.

It is a crossing which retraces the stages of structuring of the person, the series of identifications which constitute the Ego. At the same time, it mimics the opposite way that leads to parting with these identifications, divesting the Ego, and aiming at a reduction in alienation, a way forward to more freedom.

³ Gilles Deleuze, Francis Bacon. *Logique de la sensation (Francis Bacon. The Logic of Sensation)*, Turin, La Vue le Texte aux Editions de la Différence, 1981. p. 33: "... the music must make non-sound forces sonic ones."

⁴ Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, London, John Calder Publishing, 1983

It is a kind of pact with oneself and with the creation in progress that must be incited and accepted each time. Personal ethics consists in trying to be permanently in the "vanguard" of oneself, i.e., once the structural frame is established, severing the links of a musical speech which develops with its own logics, and whose destiny is to escape from a will of the conscience, or to infiltrate at all the levels of various psychic strata at work in the writing process. Permeated through this intense and destabilizing movement, musical events vibrate under the pressure of all kinds of forces: forces of sliding, mutation, distortion, condensation, accumulation, proliferation, crystallization, stratification, oscillation or pivot, symmetry, flattening, pulverization, vacuum, disappearance.

"A place. Where none."⁵

All these forces that can be encountered in psychic life, and more specifically in dreams (the access door to the unconscious), give its matter, its textures, its trajectories and its moving borders to the piece, flow into the artistic production which is at the same time a content -- forces into action -- and a container -- a place of pure forces, with elastic outlines. It is a place where simple oppositions such as subject/object, content/container, inside/outside disappear, a place where sensory experience disturbs classifications, where one touches with hearing, hears through the stomach. This immaterial place is everywhere and nowhere, giving sometimes the sensation to be outside of the human being and the world, "where none"...

The power of music is to be at the same time outside and inside, and to reverse data that one would tend to consider as definitely certain.

In a world in which the will of totally eliminating any risk contaminates every field, and in which the search for meaningless objects is a substitute for the search for meaning, I like to think that, if the artist allows him/herself to let it travel towards unknown territories and if the listener lets him/herself go to receive it without any constrain, music sheds light on the mirage of the intoxicated consumption of objects, reasserts its subversive power of wavering and dismissal, of the disruption of markers, going beyond intellectual and perceptive categories and spreading its cycle of tiny but infinite revolutions.

Clara Maïda, September 2010

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⁵ Samuel Beckett, *Worstward Ho*, London, John Calder Publishing, 1983